

*****DRAFT*****

SCHOOL DISTRICT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting
Monday, October 16, 2006
ASU Decision Theater
21 East 6th Street, Tempe AZ

Marty Shultz called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. and attendance was noted by the secretary.

Members Present

Martin Shultz, Chairman
Doris Goodale
Tom Schoaf
Kent Scribner
Vicki Anderson
Rita Leyva
George Martinez
Michael Hunter
Art Harding

Members Absent

Sandra Dowling
Jay Blanchard
Dave Naugle
Joseph Thomas

Speakers Present

Laura Knaperek, Arizona State Representative
Hugh Hallman, Tempe Mayor
Shirley Miles, Tempe Union High School District Superintendent
Carol Risano, Resident
Rae Waters, Kyrene School Board Member
Sue Knudson, Kyrene School Board Member
Janice Palmer, Arizona School Boards Association
Justin Greene, Union Elementary School District #62
John Schmadela, Agua Fria Union
Robin Berry, Palo Verde ESD #49
Pat Egeberg, Estrella Mountain Ranch resident

Guests Present

Linda Gray, Arizona State Senator
Onnie Shekerjian, City of Tempe
Howard Fischer, Capitol Media Services
Dale Despain
Cindy Ziker, Glendale Union High School
Jason Ludwig, Ahwatukee Foothills News
Jennifer Pinner, East Valley Tribune
David Braswell, Glendale Union High School District

Staff Present

Gretchen Kitchell
Marlene Johnston
Rhonda Bannard
Nettie ?
Deirdre Hahn

INTRODUCTIONS AND REMARKS

The meeting of the School District Redistricting Commission was called to order by Chairman Shultz at 2:10 p.m. at the Arizona State University Decision Theater. Chairman Shultz stated that he wanted to use the technology in the projection room but that the Commission would move to the public hearing room to take public testimony. He referred to the press release regarding today's meeting (attachment #1). Members with excused absences included Joseph Thomas who broke his toe, Jay Blanchard who is in China and Dave Naugle who was injured in a car accident.

Chairman Shultz stated that the criteria utilized by the Commission is quantifiable and the decision making process is intended to be totally transparent. The final decisions will be data driven. The Commission is sensitive to local control and history. Unified districts make sense, but change is not easy. The Commission is concerned about wisely utilizing the 7 or 8 billion dollars a year Arizona spends on education.

Chairman Shultz introduced Deirdre Hahn, Assistant Director for the Decision Theater at Arizona State University to explain the information in the handout document (attachment #2) that includes some of the data the Commission has gathered and the Maricopa County draft plans to date plus an additional Yuma County plan. The material is organized under three tabs. Chairman Shultz strongly emphasized that these are not final plans.

Tab #1

Dr. Hahn, said that the first seven pages of the document contains a spreadsheet with elementary and high school numbers. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) apportionment data is from 2005-2006. This gives you a sense of where the high school

students are attending for type 3, 4 and 5 districts. The numbers used are ADM (average daily membership), not enrollment.

Tab #2

Dr. Hahn pointed out the proposed district plans under the second tab. There is a map and a text explanation for proposed draft districts for Maricopa County and an alternative plan for Yuma County.

Tab #3

Data is provided for twenty-seven different data variables for non-unified districts. There are blank cells for some data points the Commission is still trying to collect.

Chairman Shultz advised the Commissioners and the public to not be overwhelmed by the data. Judgment will be applied to the data during plan considerations but the Commission wants to be as data driven as possible.

Dr. Hahn said that Google Earth is a way to publicly distribute this information to the public. It is possible to overlay redistricting plans on the geographic maps. A user will be able to get all the information on a certain area on the Google Earth pages through pop-ups.

Chairman Shultz said that the law restricts the Commission from including (adding) a district to an already unified district. He said the Commission may seek legislative changes to be able to propose this option. Another unresolved issue is in regard to school facilities. The Commission will meet with the School Facilities Board soon.

Chairman Shultz said that he expects the districts will continue to work with the Commission. These proposed plans are not final. The Commission has received valuable correspondence that has been well thought out and helpful to the Commission. They have also collected information meeting with groups like the Greater Phoenix Educational Management Council (GPEMC).

Public Testimony

State Representative from District 17, Laura Knaperek who served on the House of Representatives K-12 Committee and as Chairman of the Higher Education Committee and the Kyrene School Board said she lives in a pivotal district. She stated that it is critical to coordinate K-12 curriculum and to further coordinate with higher education. She said that the most important issue is what happens to students and parents. Critical interaction happens when parents meet with teachers. She stated that things that happen on a higher level need to be transparent.

She said there are important issues in these districts. One thing to be aware of is that there are schools that are losing students.

Representative Knaperek further stated that the legislation is missing implementation funding. She will work with Senator Gray to make sure the money is there. Furthermore there is the need for a timeline for implementation.

Hugh Hallman, Mayor of the City of Tempe read a letter he sent to the Commission regarding the three principle districts in Tempe (attachment #3). He stated that he did not wish to see students further divided. He said that it has been suggested that the Tempe City Council does not have the students' best interest in mind. He said that students are well served. At the most recent state of schools speech in Tempe a compelling argument was made that their districts should be unified. This way they are not competing with each other

Shirley Miles, Superintendent of the Tempe Union High School District said it would be detrimental to divide the high school district. She is in favor of a unified district of all three districts. Dividing the district would divide resources and that is not a good idea.

Carol Risano of Goodyear said she had spoken with Commissioner/Mayor Schoap. She said they would like to work on developing a city center. The school districts should use the city boundaries and should be grouped together. She asked that the children not be sent to schools outside the city boundaries. She said that right now some students ride the bus for two hours. She suggested the Commissioners check the data because it looks old to her.

Chairman Shultz says this is the latest data the Commission has. He said the Commission will need to use projections because some districts are growing so fast. He said he promises to consider the public input.

Rae Waters, Kyrene School Board Member asked that the district not be allowed to have 40,000 students – that is too big. She asked that the Commission not split on Guadalupe. This splits families and is not good for the community.

Sue Knudson, Kyrene School Board Member said that a district with 6000 - 30,000 students is a good size. Her children attend San Marcos. She said she didn't understand how adding schools and taking students out of schools would work. She stated that they were not involved in putting together these plans.

Janice Palmer of the Arizona School Boards Association (ASBA) said she hoped the Commission's work would be more global. She thanked the Commission for meeting with ASBA. She said there are districts that like the work of the Commission and those that don't. She said her members want to know how the implementation will this work. What are the financial incentives? She stated that the small school weight resources still need to be there to get support from some of her members. She said that Commissioner Naugle is helping with this issue. She asked the Commission to consider the different funding formulas for elementary and high school students and teachers. She said the Commission needs to consider how resources are divided up by the local administration.

Chairman Shultz asked Ms. Palmer what her feeling is regarding unification. She stated that ASBA is against unification coming from the state level. She asked the Commission to look at what will happen beyond drawing up the plans.

Justin Greene of the Union Elementary School District said that the Commission's 2004-2005 data does not address the tax burden that is growing every year. He said that they are now at 1600 enrollment and it doubles every year.

Chairman Shultz responded that the Commission has pinpointed fast growing districts and will get the best estimates possible for places like West Maricopa County. Saddle Mountain is also fast growing. He stated that as the Commission's work gets more refined, the data needs to be the best possible.

Commissioner Harding said that the Commission would not want to use current enrollment data because it is volatile. It would not be wise to fund on the head count from last week.

Commissioner Schoaf said it is important to talk to Superintendents about these concerns.

Chairman Shultz said maybe the Commissioners need a presentation on school funding so that everyone can better understand the financial variables.

John Schmadela of the Agua Fria Union said the Commission should take ethnicity into account. When combined they are even, but the line drawn in the proposal creates rich, poor and stranded schools.

Robin Berry, Superintendent of Palo Verde Elementary District said that representatives of the Commission have spent time meeting with the district. She said the District still has much developable land. She asked if the Commission can go back again and redraw district boundaries some time in future. She said they have looked out to 2020 with Commissioner Schoaf. Palo Verde and Arlington are proposed to combine. She said that combining may be good now, but not in 20 years. She asked if the Commission needs to set up guidelines for the future.

Commissioner Schoaf said that we can draw a boundary now but we can't project future development.

Chairman Shultz said that the Commission has Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) data analysis for the next 20 years. He said the Commission has to look at what the fast growing districts are talking about regarding projected growth. He said the Commission doesn't want a plan with a shelf life of eight years.

Chairman Shultz reminded everyone that the statute makes no changes with regard to open enrollment. He also said that school boards can still do any votes they may want at any time. He suggested, for example, that the three school boards in Tempe could vote earlier than the 2007 date scheduled for the votes on the Commission's proposals.

Pat Egeberg, a west valley resident of Estrella Mountain Ranch said they have 20,000 homes. She said that if they would be put into Buckeye that would put them too far out. Goodyear students should stay in the city boundaries. When she moved there she didn't plan for her children to go to high school in Buckeye.

Commissioner Schoaf said that any of the plans that has his name on it is at best preliminary. He has been meeting with parents, teachers and other stakeholders. He said it will take time and input to flesh these out and get the voters behind a plan. The best way to get this moving is to begin with these plans and then get local input.

Maricopa County proposed draft plans

Chairman Shultz noted some SDRC Correspondence: Diane Hamilton, Chair of GP EMC and Superintendent of Tolleson Elementary District and (attachment #4) and Dudley Butts, Superintendent of Agua Fria Union High School District (attachment #5).

Chairman Shultz said we could not get to every person but we traveled the state and asked for public input as much as possible.

Dr. Hahn presented on the data collected in the spreadsheet. Chairman Shultz noted that unified districts do not show up in this data. There is no Tucson Unified School District in this chart under Pima County.

Chairman Shultz said he has heard there could be a major developer interested in Quartzite. It was noted that Saddle Mountain district is a big geographically as Phoenix is now.

Commissioner Martinez says it would make sense to collect growth projections prioritized on zoning and anticipated areas of great growth. He asked if the MAG and COG data be used as an overlay on these maps. Dr. Hahn said they could. Commissioner Martinez said that the Commission would need to identify and prioritize for which parts of the state collecting this data makes sense.

Looking at the unorganized territories shown on the maps, Senator Gray says we now have a bill that says that once an unorganized territory reaches 150 students they must join a district or form their own.

Commissioner Harding says the Commission has the responsibility to look at unorganized territories.

Commissioner Scribner says the proposed plan for Maricopa County Central Valley Plan 1 (Phoenix Union and 13 feeder districts) uses geographic realities. He explained that districts A-E on the map in the document are the framework to begin the conversation. He said there seems to be no purpose served with 106,000 students being combined into one district.

Commissioner Hunter says that combining this into one district is not an improvement. He said there are complexities with these plans. He reminded the group that open enrollment will be maintained.

Commissioner Scribner says this plan has not been on the road yet, but it will get there soon.

Commissioner Martinez spoke to the North Central Plans. He said that enrollment is about 52,000 students. He said that he had met with Superintendents in the region. The plan was to keep feeder paths intact in order to cause minimum disruption. He noted that there is a higher tax base on the east side and this has to be taken into consideration. He added that how the funding will be affected is an important consideration.

Commissioner Hunter likes North Central Plan 2. He is concerned about splitting up Glendale Union High School. He said that in this case the size may not outweigh the other issues. Making Glendale and Washington separate districts would divide the communities and the Commission would have to be cautious. Glendale assessment would be impacted. There are other funding issues to be considered, including deseg. funds. He said the most efficient plan would be unification of the two feeder schools into the high school.

Commissioner Shultz mentioned the Syracuse study (should we have this in the record?) in regard to optimum school district size. The study finds that districts shouldn't be too small for optimum spreading of costs. Mesa has 70,000 students and they are managing well so this larger size might be okay under certain circumstances.

Commissioner Hunter says that now that both plans are on the table the Commission has the opportunity to hear from the community.

Commissioner Martinez says that Glendale Elementary has recently lost hundreds of students and families who have chosen to leave the district. The district has an ongoing study to understand the cause of this.

Commissioner Schoap said the West Valley has very serious problems. Identifying new high school sites is critical. Developers don't want 50 acre sites. He said the West Valley is a very large area and has high growth. He has spoken to some stakeholders and there is not a consensus for proposed districts. He said that when a district gets too large it is hard for school administrators to execute policy and school personnel find it difficult to find someone at the district office to answer questions. When a district is too large high level administrators may not know their own lower level administrators.

Commissioner Hunter suggested that maybe the Commission will not make a determination on Buckeye for the 2007 election. It might not make sense now because the situation is too volatile and a plan needs to wait. Other parts of the West Valley maybe make sense to make a recommendation for the ballot now.

Commissioner Scribner agreed with Commissioner Hunter that proposals don't need to be all or nothing. In some situations the Commission may not be able to predict the future with great accuracy.

Commissioner Martinez says that with the proposed plans on the table, the Commissioners may now be called upon to talk to school districts.

Chairman Shultz said the Commission will need to have simplified documents for the hearing on November 14. He asked the Commissioners if they thought the Commission should base their numbers on ADM or student enrollment figures.

Commissioners Leyva and Scribner both said they need both. They like the chart that has both ADM and enrollment numbers side by side. ADE does not collect enrollment data and that makes it hard to get that data.

Commissioner Schoaf says there is a small and limited number of schools/districts where the enrollment number is important. The Commission can identify those districts and take the enrollment numbers into account.

Commissioner Harding said to focus on ADM because this is how districts are funded. In addition to ADM, the Commission should use enrollment numbers for high growth areas.

Commissioner Schoaf says the Commission needs a template to answer the questions created by the legislation by the July deadline.

Gretchen Kitchel said the Commission is required to consider existing contractual obligations. She asked how to do this. She said she will start putting a template together. The beginning framework should be ready after the November 15th meeting of the Commission.

Without objection the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Submitted by Marlene Johnston